

By Thomas J. Mahan  
1386 Shattuck Ave.  
Berkeley 7, California

Dear Hal,  
So you think you have  
troubles. Well, read  
this and then count  
your blessings. Anyway,  
at long last, proof that  
I did write such.

Tom.

#### TYRANNY IN CALIFORNIA

This is an uncorrected  
carbon copy as you will note

Upon his return to Los Angeles from the European battle fronts Bill Mauldin said: "When I came home I found that a little people within our own borders were being trampled upon as badly as Benito ever trampled on anybody. Several thousand Americans of Japanese ancestry were being cheated and hounded and threatened and persecuted by their neighbors!"

This story deals with the daily experiences of a War Relocation Authority officer with those who were trampled upon and with those who did the trampling.

I met the first group of sixty evacuees returning to Marysville (a typical Northern California town of about 20,000 inhabitants) at 12:30 one fall morning in 1945. They should have arrived early in the afternoon of the previous day, but delayed train and bus schedules prolonged their trip, and a weary lot they were upon arrival. The following day a Marysville citizen said to me, "So you sneaked those Japs into town late at night, so we wouldn't know they were coming, did you?"

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## 2. Tyranny

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One by one, the returning evacuees came to me with puzzled looks telling me of the theft of their belongings; the violated contracts; the refusal of their former neighbors and good friends to give up the houses, cars, and possessions of all kinds with which they had been entrusted; the refusal of almost all insurance companies operating in the state to write insurance on anything belonging to persons of Japanese ancestry; the passing of resolutions by County Boards of Supervisors denying indigent aid (in violation of the State Welfare Code) to anyone of Japanese descent who had not volunteered for service in the armed forces; the insults to Japanese-American soldiers in uniform, many of whom had been wounded in action in Europe ~~or~~ in the South Pacific; the occasional peace officer or government official tempted by the "easy pickings" getting in on the kill.

Although I had anticipated some community resentment toward the returning Japanese, I did not expect to find open opposition from peace officers. Yet when ex-Marine Sergeant Earle Waters and I called on the sheriff of Shasta County, the first thing he asked was, "You aren't going to bring those God-damed Japs in here, are you?" One of his deputies stated that if the Japanese came, "Those fellows (vaguely identified as Caucasian workers on the Shasta dam) will sit on a hill with 30-30's and pick them off."

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### 3. Tyranny

3. Tyranny

Then he asked, "And how are you going to find out who did it?" The sheriff of Nevada County admitted to me that he was opposing the return of the Japanese and warned that if they came, "there'll be trouble!" According to local newspaper reports he was going out among the people, organizing and inciting them to violence against the Japanese.

The sheriff of Tulare County called on resettlers who had been employed at a farm near Visalia and urged them to leave that area. And in another community in this county the existence of a band of night riders organized to terrorize the returnees was tacitly ignored.

In addition, peace officers were obviously indifferent about protecting the lives and property of the returnees and even of those Caucasians who were trying to help the Japanese. Lack of official concern or actual negligence in these matters is evidenced by WRA statistics.

During the first year of resettlement in California some 300 incidents of violence or threatened violence involving persons of Japanese ancestry were recorded. Shotgun blasts, arson, and threats of violence were commonplace. There were 32 shootings, mostly at houses occupied by Japanese, where the inhabitants narrowly missed being killed; and in one case, shots were fired into the home of a WRA official. Six cases of assault and battery, three suicides, and one homicide were reported; and on three occasions, violence against Caucasians, friendly to Japanese.

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#### 4. Tyranny

Of the 36 buildings burned to the ground, 2 were churches, 1 a hotel, and 1 was a large warehouse; the rest were homes. Sixteen other buildings were set ~~on fire~~ and, though not completely destroyed, were badly damaged. In 29 other instances stones and other missiles were hurled at Japanese homes.

In the first 65 cases of threatened violence investigated by WRA, 35 were aimed at Japanese and 30 were made against Caucasians who had been friendly toward them. There were 24 recorded cases of employment discrimination, 2 of which involved Civil Service. In 2 cemeteries, 35 Japanese graves were despoiled, and there were 7 cases of the use of ~~the use~~ of abusive language and discrimination by OPA employees.

Although lootings ran into the thousands and destruction of crops and property was a common occurrence, instances where peace officers have apprehended the offenders are almost unknown. One WRA custodian says that to his best knowledge there was not a single Japanese house or other property from Bakersfield in Southern California to the Oregon line left untenanted that was not vandalized. And I have seen dozens of places that have been ransacked and everything of apparent value stolen.

Equally indefensible are the thefts of hundreds of guns, cameras, radios, and swords--chief contraband items--from sheriff and police offices where they had been left for safekeeping. Radios were used all over jails and many of them were even loaned outside. I saw one fine radio that had been returned to its owner with all the tubes

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## 5. Tyranny

removed and used toilet paper stuffed in the case.

Expensive guns frequently just "could not be found". Good Smith and Wesson revolvers were often replaced by old rusty pistols. If the owner complained he was shown that his receipt called for "one pistol". One Japanese showed me his rifle and shotgun that had been returned to him with the barrels bent and flattened. When he complained to the sheriff he was told to <sup>C<sup>2</sup></sup> saw the barrels off! And less than amusing is the case of the sheriff who compelled a small boy to surrender his bow and arrow before leaving for an evacuation center on the ground that they were contraband as "instruments of war".

Of course, those so defrauded of their property could have <sup>ask</sup> asked for an investigation by the Department of Justice, but I have not heard of one who did not prefer to lose his property rather than ~~to~~ risk reprisals.

Some federal employees exhibited a similar disregard for the rights of those to whom they were supposed to provide service. For example, in Marysville the postman making deliveries to the Japanese Hostel threw the mail into the weeds in front of the building, where it was often water-soaked and addresses' names almost obliterated. I saw one government check that was recovered from the weeds, water-damaged and illegible. There was at all times a large mail box in front of the Hostel, but the postman could not seem to find it. It took several complaints to the Postmaster to end this practice.

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## 6. Tyranny

Official antagonism toward the Returnees is illustrated by the case of Mike Tanimoto, a Japanese-American boy of Sacramento, who was involved in an automobile collision. Ironically, Mike was on his way to one of the few insurance companies willing to write insurance for the Japanese when a speeding car hit him broadside, crumbling the rear fender and rear door. A Sacramento policeman and a state patrolman arrived. The patrolman's "investigation" consisted of his asking Mike in an abusive manner, "Are you going to make him (the other driver, a Caucasian) pay for that?"

Mike meekly replied, "No, I'll pay." Neither the patrolman nor the policeman made a report of the accident. The driver of the other car had no license and had borrowed the car from an assistant to a Federal Judge who later tried to force Mike to pay \$350 damages to his car.

Later Mike told me that although he knew the accident was the other man's fault, he remembered the Doi case and had been afraid to say so.

In the Doi case, two Caucasians signed confessions to the illegal possession and attempted use of dynamite at the Doi's place and yet were acquitted of these charges both in a district and in a federal court.

Some public officials were scandalously unethical in their private business dealings with the returnees. A constable in a northern California town leased a farm and two houses from two Japanese-American boys when they left for an evacuation center.



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## 7. Tyranny

The lease provided that he would not sub-lease and that he would pay the taxes in lieu of rental. Upon their return they found both houses and the land sub-leased and advertised for tax sale for non-payment of taxes. When I went with the boys to interview the constable he denied that he was receiving any rental. We promptly visited the sub-lessor who produced a receipt for \$75, his last rental payment to and signed by the constable. Feeling confident that the boys would not dare take legal action against a constable, he ~~was~~ continued to hold their property and sub-lease it illegally for several additional months.

Institutions dedicated to public service have also been guilty of discriminatory practices. The Weimar Hospital, a county tubercular sanitarium, is available under the law to all who are otherwise qualified without reference to race, color, or creed. The funeral of a fifteen-year old Japanese boy who was denied admission to this hospital because, and only because, of his ancestry was held in Marysville a short time ago.

Prior to evacuation, Kaichi Sasahara had spent six years in a California State Industrial Home for the Adult Blind. Upon his return he was denied re-admittance to this institution. In commenting upon the case, the Superintendent said: "We do not want the Japs back in this home. I, myself, do not want them...The inmates would not want them back, nor would the personnel... Of course they (the Japs) could perhaps bring pressure to bear by going to the Governor, but it wouldn't get them anywhere."

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## 8. Tyranny

Asked if he would mind going on record, he said, "No, I am running this institution for the good of the institution and know it is best to keep the Japs out."

Similarly, County Boards of Supervisors in Colusa and several other counties passed resolutions denying indigent aid to any person of Japanese ancestry unless such person had volunteered for service in the United States army. Not only was this in direct violation of the State Welfare Code, but was ridiculous and cruel as applied to the blind, tottering old men and women, and dependent children.

The Fresno County Agricultural Adjustment Agency Committee, aroused by the applications from returning Japanese for Benefit Farm and Soil Conservation payments, announced that no payments would be made to them until they furnished proof by affidavits that they had repudiated dual citizenship and were not citizens of any other country. It was further provided that they furnish statements from the District Attorney that title to their land "is not nor never has been in question on the basis of alien property laws." The Committee chairman said, "We feel that this is a realistic policy," and the District Attorney added that in his opinion the Committee's requirements "are fair and reasonable."

The unfairness lay in the fact that many applicants never having had the status of dual citizenship were unable to prove their renunciation. And to require that a land title has never been in

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## 9. Tyranny

question is obviously discriminatory, especially when applied to members of one race.

Nor were discriminatory practices confined to county administrative offices. The state of California now has some sixty cases of escheat proceedings against farms belonging to Nisei (American-born Japanese). The state Alien Land Law prohibits alien Issei (Japanese-born) from owning real estate. As a result large numbers of farms were purchased in the names of Nisei children--- the only way that a family could acquire land. Under this plan a farm may be operated jointly by the Issei and the Nisei. The father is employed by his children and receives wages for his work. Profits go to the Nisei owners. Following evacuation, the State began escheat proceedings for the appropriation of many of these properties on the ground that they were owned illegally by aliens. Now, many returning Issei are afraid to live on the land belonging to their children because of the danger of escheat proceedings, and consequently many Japanese families are renting or selling their farms and are hiring out as farm workers.

However, an amendment to the state constitution designed to strengthen the Alien Land Act and make it even more difficult for Nisei to own land was voted down by an emphatic majority in the November election.

As late as September 15, 1946 the State Civil Service had failed to reinstate 88 Nisei to the state jobs they had held

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## 10. Tyranny

prior to their evacuation from California in 1942.

Public officials were dilatory in granting the returnees business licenses. In Colusa, a Japanese woman who had operated a popular barber shop for several years previous to being sent to an evacuation center applied for a renewal of her license. Although she finally obtained it, she was treated harshly and told "You should never have come back here." And other Japanese have told me that they feared to ask for licenses because of the delay and abuse to which some of them had been subjected.

Sections 51 and 52 of the State Civil Code were persistently and flagrantly violated throughout California. These sections provide that citizens are entitled to the right of service regardless of their racial origin and affix minimum damages of \$100 for each proven offense. Yet, hundreds of food stores, theaters, restaurants and business houses have refused to sell to, admit, or serve anyone of Japanese descent. In the town of Tudor a large number of returnees were forced to travel more than ten miles to do any kind of shopping.

Cases of refusal of service are too numerous to record. They included the sale of all kinds of commodities and also delivery service, bus transportation, freight hauling, repairs to farm machinery and autos, crop and home purchases, insurance, newspaper want-ads, college matriculation, and the like.

A classic example is that of Paul Yamamoto. Wounded in the Italian campaign, Paul returned to his home in Colusa after

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## 1P. Tyranny

spending four years in the army. In uniform, he took one of his uniforms to the Colusa Laundry and Dry Cleaning Works. He was greeted with, "We don't clean Jap uniforms!"

"But this is not a Jap uniform; it is a United States army uniform," Paul replied.

"Just the same, we don't do cleaning for Japs; and why did you come back here?" said the manager.

When I talked to the manager, reminding her that she was violating the State Civil Code, she said, "I didn't know the State had a Civil Code."

And so the Japanese returned home to face hostility, not only from their peace officers and public officials, but also from business men and business organizations.

I went to the office of the Secretary of the Yuba City Chamber of Commerce to try to get him to protest to local merchants who were refusing to sell to persons of Japanese ancestry. He refused. I went again, taking two Caucasian veterans of the Pacific and European theaters who tried to persuade him that he was wrong. Seething with anger against all persons with skin of other than Caucasian hue, he said, "And Eleanor wants us to make our daughters dance with buck niggers!"

His secretary said to me, "I don't see why we let those heathens come over here in the first place; this country should be for Christians."

I replied, "I learned from my history book that we got this

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## 14. Tyranny

country in the first place by taking it away from the heathen Indians, but of course my book could have been wrong." She was unconvinced.

I found the town of Wheatland plastered with "No Japs Wanted" signs. Upon my suggestion the theater manager immediately removed his two signs. And the city Mayor good-naturedly pulled the sign out of the window of his pool hall, saying, "It wasn't my idea; the people kept coming in and asking, 'When are you going to put up a sign?' So I just tried to cooperate with the sentiment of the community."

At a meeting of the Men's Forum in Marysville a prominent businessman announced that a rumor was started in Hawaii to the effect that Japan had won the war and that the Japanese navy would steam into Pearl Harbor on the following morning to take over Honolulu. "And," he said, "thirty-five thousand Japs got out on a hill that morning to see the Jap navy come in!"

While the story was entirely new to me, I could not deny that it had happened. So I merely replied, "Gullability is not limited to the Japanese. Didn't 30,000 Americans get out on a hill in New York City just before Christmas to see the Virgin Mary appear?" Voices from the audience chimed in, "Yes, they did!"

The unfriendly attitude of American Legionnaires toward their Nisei comrades-in-arms was strikingly illustrated in Marysville. There the Servicemen's Honor Roll in front of the City Hall had the names of the Japanese-American servicemen segregated in one

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### 13. Tyranny

corner. This came about because the man who was chosen to place the names on the Honor Roll took them as they came, and the first one happened to be that of a Nisei soldier. To him, this circumstance appeared to be no problem. Local Legionnaires and others were aroused and the District Attorney of the adjoining county, also a Legionnaire, suggested the segregation as a solution. Ironically, the names of two Chinese-Americans were segregated with those of the Japanese-American.

However, this year Marysville members of the newly organized American Veterans Committee celebrated the fourth of July by going out with paint and brushes and changing the discriminatory listing of names.

Across the river, in Yuba City, they have their Court House Honor Roll also, but the names of Pete Kurihara, Mits Oshita, George Kurihara, Bill Fuchiyami, Goerge Murimoto, and George Iwanaga are not written there. All of them are American born and all were in the Army. Incidentally, George Iwanaga, then on his way to Japan to join McArthur's occupation forces, told me that he and his wife and baby slept in their car two nights in Marysville because no one would let them have a room.

And the Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post in Richmond opposed the opening of Federal Public Housing units in Richmond to families of Nisei veterans, although the housing was available and desperately needed.

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On the contrary, the CIO welcomed the returnees and admitted them to membership. The Alameda County Council of the CIO passed a resolution authorizing a fine of \$50 against any member who advocated racial discrimination. The CIO Warehouseman's Longshoreman's Union in Stockton deprived several Caucasians of their membership because they protested against working with some Japanese-American boys.

The most disillusioning experience for the Japanese, however, was the treatment they received from individuals--oftentimes their former friends and neighbors.

A Japanese grocer in Oakland left goods valued at \$5000 with a Caucasian friend. When he returned he found that his friend had sold all of his belongings and moved away. The Caucasian, later located and interviewed, said that he had given away most of the property in question because it was worthless. However, in preference to court action, he made a cash settlement of \$3000 for the "worthless" property.

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## 15. Tyranny

prior to evacuation. I stopped the car and Fred rushed out to greet his former employer. A cold stare met him. As I approached, the employer's wife dashed from the house and cried, "A white man who has to run around with Japs must be hard up for a job. Get out, both of you. Get off my sidewalk! Get off my lawn!!" We got off and Fred's hopes of getting his job back were blasted.

A Caucasian neighbor requested Tom and Paul Yamamoto to leave their shotguns with him for the duration, promising that he would take good care of them. When Tom went for the guns, he was ordered off the place and told not to return. When I talked to the accommodating neighbor, his only excuse for his actions was that the boys were "Japs". Finally after several months had passed and the Civil Liberties Union had threatened to sue, he returned the guns, but both had been soaked in water until they were ruined from rust and barrel pits.

I went with a young Nisei and his father-in-law to see a prominent business man and rancher in Marysville, who had taken over and harvested 65 acres of rice for them after they were evacuated. The agreement was that they would share the returns from the crop. This affluent business man, seated in his luxuriously furnished home and talking in a patronizingly friendly way, first denied that he had harvested any of the crop and then admitted that he had harvested and sold 1200 sacks of rice for them. (A conservative estimate for that acreage would be 2500 sacks.) He insisted that he had lost money on the crop and re-

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## 16. Tyranny

fused to pay the Japanese anything. He was safe because he knew that they would not go to court.

A Nisei boy rented his furnished house and farm to a Caucasian friend who signed a lease agreeing to keep up the insurance and to share the profits from the peach orchard and other crops as rental. After two and one-half years of occupancy the house with all its furnishings burned and the insurance had long since lapsed. The tenant moved away, paid nothing for the crops and offered no explanation for the fire, although some of his neighbors stated that they believed it was of incendiary origin.

There were innumerable cases of Caucasians in possession of Japanese cars and other property who remained friendly until they were asked to return them. Immediately their antagonism knew no bounds.

At the time of evacuation a Nisei farmer in Yuba County had to leave his place on six hours notice. He left his furniture and household goods in the house and his farm machinery on the farm in the care of a banker from whom he had rented the farm. When I talked to the banker about the return of these possessions, he angrily informed me that he had sold the farm and knew nothing of the furniture and machinery.

A large truckload of goods was delivered recently to the farmhouse of Nisei Kay Tokuno in Palermo. The driveway was very wide and there was a helper on the back of the truck; but the driver managed to back into a large olive tree, tearing off about half of it and completely ruining it. When Mr. Tokuno protested, the

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## 17. Tyranny

driver became abusive, refused to give him the name of the trucking company, and said that he was going to re-enlist in the Army so he could kill some more Japs.

At Auburn, a Nisei boy paid a dealer \$1000 cash for a truck two weeks before evacuation. Learning that he could not take a car to the evacuation center, he resold it for \$800 to the same dealer. The dealer paid him \$250 cash and on the same day sold the truck again for \$1200. He refused to pay the Nisei boy any more, saying, "Well, what can he do about it?"

Many of the Japanese owned homes, but came back to find them occupied (often illegally) by Caucasians. Getting the tenants to move was a slow and often precarious process. A Nisei boy who had just returned from four years in the Army brought his family to Marysville. He found that his house was illegally occupied by a Caucasian family. They paid no rent, used wood belonging to the Japanese for fuel, and helped themselves to their other possessions. He asked them to move. The man replied, "You're a Jap, aren't you?" A few days later the man tried to attack the ex-soldier's father with a large bar of iron. A lawyer was consulted. He complained that the court was jammed with cases and that it would take a long time to get an eviction order. Finally after months of living in a store building, the Japanese got the eviction order and the Caucasian family moved without paying any rent. This case is typical.

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## 18. Tyranny

Housing, always a difficult problem for the Japanese, was especially acute in Marysville. The Buddhist church, used as a temporary hostel, was overflowing with more than sixty people. When the Migratory Farm Labor Camp at near-by Yuba City was opened to them, many went to look at the units, but none would move in. When asked why, they invariably replied, "We are afraid of the Okies."

Accordingly, the Camp Manager called a general assembly meeting one night at which Colonel Wallace Moore, who represented the War Department and who had taken the first Nisei soldiers into South Pacific combat, spoke. He told of the loyalty and bravery of Nisei soldiers on both battle fronts, of the need for keeping up the morale of some two thousand Nisei soldiers in McArthur's occupation forces, and of the importance of fair treatment for those of Japanese ancestry at home.

Although the Caucasians had shown by the questions they asked Colonel Moore that they felt no deep-seated hostility toward them, still none of the Japanese dared move in. So I went to Bob Inoui who had ~~calculated~~ with his family of six to find his house burned to the ground. Explaining the urgency of the situation, I asked him to move to the Labor Camp and break the ice for the others. Bob moved in. Nothing happened except that on the first night, the leader of the Mexican Nationals who were also living at the camp welcomed Bob and his family, saying, "We have food. Won't you come and share it with us?" Soon seventeen Japanese families

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## 19. Tyranny

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less hospitable than the Mexican Nationals were the neighbors of Eiichi Sakanye. When he returned to his home in San Jose he found a printed placard in his mailbox which read: "SEND ALL JAPS BACK TO JAPAN. COMPLIMENTS OF EVERY RANCHER THIS SIDE OF THE BAYSHORE HIGHWAY, YOU BASTARDS."

In San Francisco, Mr. Tamotsu Sakai was greeted with a bouquet of flowers, bound in black crepe, and tossed on the front steps of his home. The attached note read: "You damn

dirty Japs. We are going to kill you and this is what you will need pretty soon." Later Mr. Sakai's newly seeded lawn was despoiled and his fence destroyed.

A Nisei boy from Redwood City reported to the WRA: "Not long ago, I have written to the Gilroy Hot Springs (formerly operated by Japanese) because my father has been bothered with arthritis. We used to go there quite often before the war. I just asked if they were in business and I received this letter: 'Inouye--WE ARE STILL IN BUSINESS HERE BUT--NO JAPS ARE ALLOWED AT OUR SPRINGS--THE FARTHER YOU STAY AWAY FROM HERE THE BETTER. ONCE A JAP, ALWAYS A JAP, EVEN AMONGST HIS OWN RATS--SO GO BACK TO DESTROYED TOKYO. The Management.'"

Even the children were not immune from Caucasian hostility. When Mr. James Mills Jr. of Mills Orchard provided housing for a crew of Japanese fruit pickers and their families, the near-

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Immediately after relocation began, hundreds of pathetic appeals came from the Japanese resettlers in all parts of the state. Eva Tanimoto, Nisei girl at Gridley wrote: "Today we received a threatening letter telling us to go back to Tule Lake or go back to Japan."

Aiko Yoshida, Nisei girl from Campbell lamented: "My house is frightfully damaged, the windows broken, many things left behind have been stolen, the cherry trees are all dead from lack of care and water. In short, my entire property is in ruins."

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## 21. Tyranny

Charles Iwasaki of Reedley explained: "Today I went to see a packer about my Santa Rosa plums...He finally asked if I was a 'Jap' and I said, 'its true'. Then he said, 'Can't buy from you'...and he said he had a son fighting...then I told him we have brothers fighting too, but he said, 'that doesn't matter because we are fighting your race.'"

From a Hanford Nisei, a letter written in the interest of his pastor read: "Reverend Inoui of the Japanese Presbyterian church is having trouble getting housing. The church and manse burned down the day before he arrived."

A Nisei girl in Madera inquired: "What is it that people in California resent? I can't understand our customers, neighbors, etc. They were always so friendly and good to us...I have almost lost faith and courage in everything...I'm so upset I just don't think its worthwhile living."

From a Nisei boy at Selma came the report: "I am still having trouble with trespassers throwing rocks into my home." Another Nisei boy wrote asking: "Would it be safe to walk the streets of Fresno as any other American?"

But the story is not all disparaging. Individuals and organizations are attempting to diminish racial tensions and to integrate community relationships.

In the great fruit-growing valley adjacent to Marysville and Yuba City many of the large growers anxiously awaited the return of the Japanese. Or rather, they eagerly sought improvement in public and private sentiment to the point where they felt safe

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## 22. Tyranny

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Mr. Kay Sakamoto had four sons in the army, one of whom was killed on the Italian front. The day before their return to their home in Loomis, the Sakamoto's house was burned to the ground. Checks totaling more than \$1000 poured in from persons wishing to help rebuild the Sakamoto's home. Upon receipt of a letter and check from Naval Lieutenant J. William Norman, Mrs. Sakamoto wrote: "I am very grateful for the many fine Americans with their genuine spirit of fair play and helpfulness. I gave a son to the cause that this American way of life may be perpetuated and every day I am realizing that my son's supreme sacrifice was not in vain."

The one place where Japanese-Americans have been almost universally welcomed and made to feel at home is in the public schools. School men throughout Northern California have told me that Japanese children are in no way discriminated against at school. Chester Winship, Superintendent of Elementary Schools in Yuba City said to me, "The other kids are loving them to death." This is typical of the reports from school administrators in general.

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### 23. Tyranny

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Perhaps the greatest individual contribution to the orderly resettlement of the Japanese in the Sacramento Valley, where large numbers have relocated, has been made by Joseph Williams, Director of the Negro USO in Marysville. The recreation facilities of his large, well-equipped buildings have always been available to Japanese boys and girls when not otherwise in use. His friendly attitude, shared by his entire staff, when almost no other recreation facilities were available, has been a matter of much comment and praise by Japanese. They still talk about the large turkey that he presented to the fifty residents of the Japanese Church Hostel last Thanksgiving.

The Ohmuras were the first Japanese to return to Chico. As a gesture of goodwill The Chico Record, leading daily newspaper, published a front page story about them. The story told of Mr. Ohmura's former prominence as a business man and mentioned that his son, Paul, was serving as a medical corpsman in the army. On the following day, the paper published a letter from Seaman Donald R. Jennings commenting on the Ohmura's return which read in part: "...was greatly surprised that the citizens of Chico would permit such a disgrace to befall the town...having spent 28 months in the Pacific fighting the Japanese, I fail to see how any decent American can really classify himself as an

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## 24. Tyranny

American and still permit these people to live as their neighbors. I have been bold enough to call these creatures people, but...I find it utterly impossible to believe that they are even human. Personally, my vocation and I feel certain--that of a great many other returning service men, on meeting a Jap face to face--would be to shoot him, or her, as the case may be, without a moment's hesitation."

For weeks afterwards, The Record was deluged with letters, which for the most part, were favorable to the Japanese. And contrary to Mr. Jennings' opinion the majority of service men who have seen combat in either the Pacific or European theaters have no wish to ~~kill the Japanese men or women or their children~~ <sup>desire discriminate against the Americans.</sup> ~~who are living in this country.~~

The returning Japanese may look to organizations as well as to individuals for friendly assistance. A directory issued at the close of the WRA program lists sixteen national groups, including the American Civil Liberties Union, the Girl Scouts, the National Congress of Parents and Teachers, and the ~~YMCA~~ <sup>YWCA</sup> and the ~~YMCA~~. Many of the national organizations have set up committees to deal specifically with the returnee's problems. One such is the National Committee established by the National Social Work Assembly. This committee prepared for release by national agencies to local communities a series of bulletins dealing with Attitude, Education, Housing, Job Counseling, and kindred subjects.

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lend assistance or have the major responsibility for planning and coordinating community services to the Japanese. Committees of interested citizens including both Caucasian and Japanese were organized in as many localities as possible to assist the resettlers with their various problems after WRA offices closed.

The Berkeley Inter-Racial Committee, the Oakland Council for Civic Unity, and the International Institute rendered outstanding service to the resettlers in relation to all types of problems. The International Institute employs a full time director whose efforts will be devoted entirely to the service of the Japanese in the Bayt Bay area.

Although some County Boards of Supervisors refused to help indigent Japanese residents, many counties accepted full responsibility for them. The County hospital at Livermore accepted twenty-one Japanese patients and the Livermore Veterans hospital admitted one. The Welfare Director of Contra Costa county volunteered to act as counselor and advisor to all Japanese coming to him following the close of WRA offices.

Much of the prejudice against the Japanese arises, of course, from underlying economic pressures. Laboring men fear the threat of cheap labor; farmers fear competition from Japanese growers and producers; and business men are afraid of losing other employees if they employ Japanese.

But another of the chief causes of hostility is simply a lack of information. One prominent business man who is friendly toward the Japanese said to me, "Unfortunately, most of the Nisei

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lend assistance or have the major responsibility for planning and coordinating community services to the Japanese. Committees of interested citizens including both Caucasian and Japanese were organized in as many localities as possible to assist the resettlers with their various problems after WRA offices closed. The Berkeley Inter-Racial Committee, the Oakland Council for Civic Unity, and the International Institute rendered outstanding service to the resettlers in relation to all types of problems. The International Institute employs a full time director whose efforts will be devoted entirely to the service of the Japanese in the West Bay area.

Although some County Boards of Supervisors refused to help indigent Japanese residents, many counties accepted full responsibility for them. The County hospital at Livermore accepted twenty-one Japanese patients and the Livermore Veterans hospital admitted one. The Welfare Director of Contra Costa county volunteered to act as counselor and advisor to all Japanese coming to him following the close of WRA offices.

Much of the prejudice against the Japanese arises, of course, from underlying economic pressures. Laboring men fear the threat of cheap labor; farmers fear competition from Japanese growers and producers; and business men are afraid of losing other employees if they employ Japanese.

But another of the chief causes of hostility is simply a lack of information. One prominent business man who is friendly toward the Japanese said to me, "Unfortunately, most of the Nisei



## 26. Tyranny

soldiers who fought in the war came from the Hawaiian Islands."

I showed him the War Department's release as follows:

Persons of Japanese descent who served in the U. S. army  
between July 1, 1940 and June 30, 1945

|               |                    |        |
|---------------|--------------------|--------|
| From Hawaii   | Enlisted Personnel | 10,598 |
|               | Officers           | 109    |
| From Mainland | Enlisted Personnel | 11,683 |
|               | Officers           | 142    |
|               | Grand Total        | 22,532 |

He accepted these figures, but numerous others to whom I talked refused to do so; some going so far as to insist that no Japanese American had ever served in our army.

On every hand absurd accusations were made. A chiropractor who had a "No Japs Wanted" sign in his office window gave as the reason the story that when one of our battleships was attacked by Japanese planes a Nisei sailor on board got behind a life-boat and turned his machine gun on the other sailors, mowing them down. The fallacy of this tale was obvious because during the war the Navy did not accept Nisei. But this information did not shake his belief in the story.

Five different persons told me the story of the Japanese gardener who turned out to be an Admiral in the Japanese Navy. In each case they knew the family well and swore that it was true. In each case different persons and places were involved.

Rumors ran rampant throughout the war period regarding the number of evacuees who were found to be spies and dangerous enemies. Some of the estimates were placed in the thousands.

(more)



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## 27. Tyranny

Factually, only 6 persons out of 109,000 evacuated by the Army were found to be potentially dangerous.

Other misconceptions concerning the Japanese were the beliefs that all the Japanese interned at Tule Lake were disloyal, that Japanese multiply like rats and threaten to outnumber Caucasians in California, that most of them were subsidized by the Japanese government, that they were sending most of their earnings back to Japan, that they do not become Americanized, and that they are unfair competitors because their standard of living is much lower than that of Caucasians.

The facts with reference to these charges demonstrate them to be untrue. For example, there were some 16,000 loyal evacuees at Tule Lake. And the birth rate for Japanese-Americans is actually lower than that for Caucasians! The Tolan Fourth Interim Report states that "Their birth rate during the past decade has been insufficient to balance mortality and emigration."

It is conservatively estimated that fifty per cent of the alien Japanese in the California "fruit bowl" came from Hiroshima because of extreme poverty and the unusually dense population there. Though some of them sent money to their people in Japan, the post office and bank records show the amount sent to be only a small fraction of estimated earnings.

Many Nisei are so highly Americanized that they do not speak or read Japanese and most of them are far more American than Jap-

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## 28. Tyranny

anese in their religion, customs, habits, and attitudes. The Nisei found it greatly amusing that a few of the Issei believed at the time they returned to California that Japan had won the war. When the old people were asked to explain McArthur's presence in Toyko they would reply, "Oh, he is a prisoner of war."

But their Nisei sons and daughters had no doubts about the outcome of the war and some of them enjoy taunting the obstinate old Issei. One young Nisei girl, wife of a Nisei serviceman now in Japan, said to me, "I told my mother that Hirohito is shining McArthur's shoes." She added, "If I were in Washington I'd send all of the renouncees back to Japan." I questioned her to make sure of her point of view. "Sure I would; I'd give them a kick in the seat of the pants!" she declared.

I have been in hundreds of Japanese houses and I have eaten meals in many of their homes. As a result, I am convinced that their standard of living is equal to that of Caucasians of the same occupational and economic levels.

(And they are determined to maintain decent living standards.) Wage cutting, frowned upon by WRA, is not a prevailing practice among the Japanese. Although many Caucasians found that, by putting forth an Herculean effort they could sublimate their prejudices against the Japanese if they could employ them for one-third or one-fourth the prevailing wage rate, few were able to do so.

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## 29. Tyranny

A Chico rancher asked the WRA for a loyal Japanese to work on his farm. He offered a full-time, permanent job and mentioned that a Japanese should be grateful for such an opportunity, because "sentiment in Chico is not so good." He was very indignant because WRA failed to find the man he wanted at \$40 a month.

Previous to the evacuation about two-thirds of the Japanese in California were American born. And these younger people were the first to take advantage of the opportunity to relocate from WRA centers to other parts of the country long before the exclusion order was lifted from the Pacific Coast area. Accordingly, large numbers of Nisei settled in the East and Middle West while the older people preferred the temporary security of the WRA centers. Consequently, the resettlers who have returned to California comprise a much higher percentage of old people. This tends to increase the difficulty of a return ~~to~~ the normal stream of life in the communities in which they now live.

The Japanese-Americans watch with intense personal interest the developments in Japan. Aware that any large-scale trouble with the occupation forces in Japan may incite Americans to new reprisals against them, many live in a state of constant anxiety and fear. A small minority are bitterly resentful of the pressures bearing down upon them because of their ancestry and make their attitude known to Caucasians at every opportunity.

But by and large, the Japanese people, young and old alike, are surviving the consequences of evacuation with chins up and

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### 30. Tyranny

a determination to overcome its economic, social, and emotional ~~aspects~~ <sup>handicaps</sup> as rapidly as possible. Many Japanese and Caucasians are expressing the opinion that relationships of the two groups in the future will be better than before due to better understanding.

An attractive Nisei girl married a Caucasian Southern Pacific Railroad employee previous to VJ day. They are now living happily and making many friends in the small town of Live Oak. True, they had to go to Seattle to get married, because of California's miscegenation law, but they did not mind that. Reports of other Caucasian-Japanese marriages have been recieved from other parts of the state.

Wide circulation of two pamphlets, "Nisei In Uniform" and "They Work For Victory", which present picture stories of Nisei in the war and the story of the Japanese-American's contribution to the war effort, has done much to promote better understanding. The film, "Challenge to Democracy", depicting the experiences of the famous 442 nd Combat team of Nisei soldiers in the European and Pacific war theaters, life in the WRA centers, and stressing the need for maintaing the morale of Nisei soldiers in the occupation forces has been shown to many organizations with excellent results.

Generalizations are of course precarious, but it is probable that Californians are no better nor any worse than any other large group of Americans living in any other section of the country. That Californians have perhaps been more severe in their treatment of the returning Japanese than people in other parts of the coun-

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### 31. Tyranny

try is testimony to the effectiveness of long propagandization of a people against a minority group.

Had the Negroes been evacuated from the South, the Jews from New York, or the Scandinavians from Minneapolis, their return would doubtless have been heralded with gunfire, incendiary fire, and all of the methods of attack conjured up against the Japanese by many unthinking inhabitants of California.

As an outlet to their emotions (so easily stirred up by the contemplative pleasure of anticipated economic gain) Californians have written a page in the history of their state which even its makers will regret cannot be obliterated in the future.

Racial hatred cannot be maintained at peak when the primary cause for it is gone. The cause, chiefly economic advantage in the case of the returning Japanese, has been largely eliminated through the passing of opportunity to exploit them. Now almost all is quiet on the California resettlers front.

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